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DEPT FOR NEA/MAG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/17/2016

TAGS: PREL PHUM PGOV MO KPKO

SUBJECT: MINURSO FREE OF TIP/SEA PROBLEMS

REF: A. 06 SECSTATE 204157

1B. 06 CASABLANCA 819

Classified By: Classified by DCM Wayne J. Bush for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Embassy continues to believe Trafficking in Persons (TIP) and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) are not a problem with the MINURSO mission in the Western Sahara. MINURSO Force Commander Maj. General Kurt Mosgaard told Polcouns that there had been two incidents that were of concern in the past six months, and which have been referred to the UN Office of Internal Oversight. Although due to the resource constraints these investigations have not been completed, neither of these incidents had been clearly been established as SEA, but both had been dealt with.

¶2. (SBU) According to Mosgaard and press accounts, in the first incident, a Military Observer had been found in the company of two local women in a remote place during Ramadan. Although SEA has not been established, the officer has already been sent home, on the grounds of violating a specific MINURSO injunction to respect local sensitivities, particularly during Ramadan. In the second case, a local resident called the police on his neighbor, a MINURSO civilian employee, for a loud party, and complained that the employee had numerous contacts with local prostitutes. Police came to the scene and found several women drinking soda with the employee and another male colleague. It has not been established that any activity of concern took place. Nonetheless, the issue was being addressed by MINURSO and there have been no further incidents. In both cases local press reported on the incidents. MINURSO is attempting to obtain police reports, so far without success. The press identified the women in both cases as prostitutes, but there was no evidence so far that this had been the case. The press also reported the expulsion of the officer in the first case, which has strengthened public opinion that the UN is doing the right thing.

¶3. (SBU) The Moroccan Ministry of Interior (MOI) official responsible for coordination with MINURSO, a senior civil servant with rank of Governor, assured the Embassy that the GOM has no problem with MINURSO on these issues. On the contrary, he believed that MINURSO had handled the incidents firmly, efficiently and in accordance with local sensitivities. He personally believed that these were not cases of SEA, but of conduct without the exploitative aspect. We concur in his assessment that Mosgaard and MINURSO are serious and effective on these issues.

¶4. (SBU) As noted in reftel B, MINURSO personnel cooperate with the GOM in efforts to deal with trafficked persons found in the Western Sahara, but as this is not part of the MINURSO mandate, there is not much they can do. There are no reports of MINURSO personnel or associates themselves engaging in TIP

or related activities.

¶5. (SBU) Extensive contacts with Moroccan and Sahrawi NGO's have yielded no reports of problems of either TIP or SEA. We continue to believe that the general public perceives MINURSO as being generally responsive on these concerns.  
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